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**England in Transition, 1789-1832. A Study of Movements**, by William Law Mathieson, LL.D. Pp. 285. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920.

This well-written survey of a most absorbing epoch in English history comes from the authoritative pen of Dr. Mathieson of Edinburgh. It is indeed worthy of intense study by all, who like the author, sympathize with reform movements and with reformers of all shades of opinion. There is traced the use of liberalism through the spiritual, intellectual, political, and economic forces of the time by a scholar of deep historical research, with a philosophical turn and with a broad human understanding. It is not the work of a radical, but of a believer in conservative reform, who does not fear the people in a democracy.

The organization of material adds to the difficulty of reading retentively, despite the unusual clarity of style. Subjects are treated chronologically in two or three page essays in different chapters, which are somewhat artificially marked off, "War and Repression, 1789-1802," "War and Progress, 1803-1814," "Disillusions of Peace, 1814-1820," "The Liberal Spirit, 1820-1828," and "Triumph of Reform, 1828-1832." Hence to assemble the material on any subject, it is necessary to use the index. This plan may be desirable for the sake of accuracy and the co-ordination of germane topics, although in a dozen essays, it would seem that the writer could have presented the same summary in a form more satisfactory and agreeable to the general reader.

The political discussion leading to the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 commences with the early agitations of the popular idol, John Wilkes of the *North Briton*, and the efforts of Pitt and the Duke of Richmond. The French Revolution with its criminal excesses caused a strange reaction. Progressive legislation, like our own Alien and Sedition Acts, stifled democratic ideas. The cry of "Jacobin" met the reformer, no matter how conservative he might be. Liberty, the people, and sovereignty were words which sent men to jail or to the pillary. The mob, which had cried "Wilkes and Liberty," now shouted the Tory watchword, "Church and King," as they wrecked the library and laboratory of Priestley. Not until the Spanish national uprising proved that the people, not dynasties, were to thwart the Napoleonic ambitions, was there an abatement of the autocratic police power. Waterloo brought victory rather than peace. Hard-times, labor riots, anti-machinery mobs in industrial centres, an

increased number of political journals made aggressive the demands for Parliamentary reform. Politicians gave heed. The un-reformed Parliament and the suffrage qualifications, which gave a government monopoly to the upper middle class, had to go. England was started on its way toward a representative democracy by the first great Reform Act.

The belated recognition of trade unionism, the retardation of child-labor legislation, the capitalistic antagonism to factory and mine enactments, the mitigation of the harsh treatment of debtors, the softening of the ancient game laws, and the humanizing of poor relief are all considered in a thorough-going fashion. Considerable attention is paid to the final codification of the atrocious criminal law, with its two hundred and twenty-three capital offenses, all but a few of which had been added since the Reformation.

The author is especially interested in the abolition of the slave-trade, which Pope Leo X had denounced as an outrage on "not the Christian religion only, but human nature itself," but of which English statesmen since the Treaty of Utrecht were determined to obtain a monopoly, which would be a source of wealth and a mainstay of shipping. Today, it is hard to understand how of all reforms the Angelican Bishops in the House of Lords could vote pro-slave with the West Indian slave-holding and the London and Liverpool slave-trading interests. But, the reform record of the bishops was bad.

Oglethorpe attempted to keep slavery out of Georgia, but Whitefield, the evangelist, whose estate included a number of slaves, aided in repealing the exclusion law in 1749. Wesley was of a different turn, referring in his journal to "that execrable sum of all villainies, commonly called the slave-trade." The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel owned slave plantations in the Barbados, where, as late as 1784, they denied their blacks even religious instruction. Joseph Ramsay, a Scottish minister, was exiled from St. Kitts because of his efforts to christianize the slaves of the island. Bishop Proteus alone of the Angelican hierarchy dared antagonize the intrenched slave-interests by sermon and pamphlet. Yet, as Englishmen came to learn intimately of the horrors of the "middle passage," adherents of the reform multiplied in numbers. Lord Mansfield's decision (1772) had suggested the way. Able agitators like Thomas Paine, whom the author reveres, Newton, an ex-slaver, the

eminent barrister Granville Sharp, Cowper the poet, and, above all, Wilberforce, led the crusade. Burke was still thinking in terms of Jacobinism, though the Irish representatives in Parliament were favorable to the reform, just as their Catholic successors under O'Connell were to lead in the slave emancipation of 1833. The Quakers and Scottish towns presented innumerable petitions, and societies pledged themselves to use no West Indian products. Churchmen might cry radicalism, but the public conscience was awakened. Pitt's death brought the more ardent advocate Fox into power, and the bill abolishing the slave trade became a statute of the realm in 1807.

Philanthropy was forced as a tenet of High Churchism by the religious and moral revival of Wesley and his disciples. Attempts were actually instituted to uplift London. Chapels were erected as a reconstruction measure, when the veterans of the Napoleonic Wars were crying for bread and lower taxation. Sunday Schools were established, together with an occasional charity school, despite the suspicion of reactionary Anglicans, who, in their dread of non-conformity, saw a danger in teaching the children of the poor to read and write, an attitude unchanged as late as 1833. Lord Brougham, however, declared in 1820, that this was a modern theory, for had not Pope Benedict, in 1724, issued a bull encouraging the establishment of schools on the plea that the source of all evil was ignorance? Yet, Joseph Lancaster, a Friend, and Andrew Bell were condemned for their endeavors to provide non-sectarian primary schools. In 1807, the House of Lords led by the prelates voted down a Common's bill providing a two-year parochial school training for the children of the poor.

"England and Wales . . . were unquestionably the least and worst educated countries in Protestant Europe," our author affirms, as he notes that in 3,500 parishes, there was not the vestige of a school, and in 12,000 parishes the dame schools afforded but a minimum of moral instruction. Marriage registers, with marks instead of signatures, bear evidence of an untaught people, quite as much as a soldiery which could neither read nor write. This, too, at a time when the religious order, Les Frères des Ignorants were laboring untiringly for French primary education.

The secondary schools, the old endowed pre-reformation preparatory colleges, were in a bad way, we are advised, but left

without much data. Cambridge was slightly better, but at Oxford on the eve of the nineteenth century teaching had all but ceased according to Adam Smith. Gibbon recalled but one lesson in fourteen months of tutorship, as he observed that, "public exercises and examinations were totally unknown." Jaffrey, in 1792, wrote that, "Except praying and drinking, I see nothing else that it is possible to acquire in this place." The Bodleian Library rarely saw two books a day in use. The renaissance came, for, in 1812, the Earl of Dudley found that Oxford had become "a place of education." Numbers increased from a hundred to eight hundred students, many of the better sort, as an aristocratic writer maintained. The schools improved, but the day of English primary legislation was destined to long delay, if it has yet appeared.

Religious reforms were bound to follow, once liberals had gained the saddle. Dissenters were freed from the Test, Conventicle, Corporation, and Five Mile Acts. Unitarians were given legal status in 1812, somewhat earlier than in New England. Jewish disabilities, aside from the right to a seat in Parliament, were removed, for the 30,000 in Jewry had wealth and leadership in the money barons, Goldsmid, Rothschilds, and the Montefiores. Jewish relief had no firmer friends in Russell, Brougham, Mackintosh and Macaulay, than in O'Connell and his Irish followers, once they obtained seats in Parliament. The *Annual Register* stated the case when grudgingly it recognized that this support was, "on what were now commonplace grounds in all such discussions, that is, that it was persecution to look at a man's religion when speaking of his fitness for civil things" (p. 262).

Little fault can be found with Dr. Mathieson's presentation of the subject of Catholic Emancipation, unless it be his emphasis of clerical influence in the Clare election in which the forty shilling freeholders turned from the pro-Catholic, Irish landlord, Vesey Fitzgerald to the Catholic leader, O'Connell. The Duke of Wellington believed that failure to pass the act, which would seat O'Connell, would result in civil war, and Peel agreed, so that a bill, similar to that of four years earlier, was again passed by the Commons as a ministry measure. Government influence overcame the opposition of the Lords, and the bill became law in 1829. Clerical power, it was argued, would be counteracted by

the provision raising the suffrage qualification for county voters from forty shillings to ten pounds, thus disfranchising a third of the electorate.

No reform act created such a furor. Nine-tenths of the Anglican ministers were avowedly anti-Catholic, their influence made the measure most unpopular with the smug middle class over whom they exerted considerable ascendancy. Petitions were obtained by ministers in a house to house canvas for signatures; even jails and reformatories were not overlooked. Inflammatory tracts and handbills revived the "Bloody Mary" legends, and pulpit politicians crowned the Pope, once more, instead of Napoleon, as anti-Christ. Lord Eldon presented for Liverpool a petition too heavy to lift. Nottingham was pro-Catholic, Sheffield divided, but otherwise the midlands were as opposed as the southwest. London of the Lord Gordon riots of fifty years earlier displayed little interest. Of its barristers, three hundred and twenty-seven out of four hundred and fifty were in favor of Emancipation, as were two-thirds of the city corporation.

The author advances the view that the best educated opinion favored toleration, although Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge feared the concession. Peel resigned his Oxford University seat with an appeal on the question to the graduates, only being defeated for re-election by 755 to 609 votes. At least eleven out of fourteen professors announced themselves for Peel and Catholic Emancipation. The Quakers, once opposed, joined the other dissenting sects in support, leaving only the Methodists in support of the intolerance of the establishment. The *Quarterly Review* remained silent, while Wilberforce and the *Christian Observer* were stout adherents. Dr. Arnold advocated the concession as a Christian duty in a pamphlet which offended his clerical brethren, for he challenged their right to decide questions involving history, which "they avowedly neglected to study."

Dr. Mathieson's book is a valuable contribution to the historical scholarship of a period and of a phase of national life, which deserves deep study if one would correctly evaluate English democracy and British nineteenth century prestige.

R. J. P.